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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 003544

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES PEACE PROCESS WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE RESTREPO

REF: A. BOGOTA 3346

[1](#)B. RESTON 021622Z

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) On April 2, Ambassador met with High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo to discuss the paramilitary peace process and, especially, to confirm that the GOC would give paramilitary leaders no assurances regarding their possible extradition to the U.S. Restrepo explained recent changes to the GOC's "Alternative Sentencing" bill and assured Ambassador that, based on President Uribe's explicit instructions, no extradition assurances will be given. Restrepo said the country's two largest paramilitary groups, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB), have agreed to participate in joint negotiations with the Government. Restrepo will propose that AUC and BCB leaders concentrate in a 200 sq km rural area of Cordoba department (map faxed to WHA/AND), where the GOC can monitor them. In exchange for concentrating their troops and enforcing the cease-fire, paramilitary leaders will not be arrested while in the concentration zone. The Ambassador stressed the need to ensure that the GOC continues to hold concentrating leaders responsible for the actions of any of their unconcentrated troops. Restrepo expressed the belief that para leaders are accepting GOC conditions because of their reverses on the battlefield and promised that commanders who do comply will face the full force of the Colombian security forces. Restrepo also characterized the predicament of para leader Carlos Castano, noting that in the most recent AUC communique (ref b) he was a signatory, but not named as either a "comandante" or a negotiator. End Summary.

Negotiations Moving Forward

[1](#)2. (C) Restrepo said that President Uribe, his cabinet, and congressional sponsors of the "Alternative Sentencing" bill had achieved consensus on the draft legislation by removing any reference to extradition, creating a "Truth and Justice Commission" to recommend in individual cases who gets what benefits, and mandating five to ten-year prison terms for serious violations of human rights (ref a). The country's two largest paramilitary organizations, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB), had formed a unified negotiating table. AUC and BCB leaders continue to push for GOC commitments not to jail or extradite them.

[1](#)3. (C) Restrepo intends to propose that the 33 AUC and BCB commanders concentrate in the para-dominated region of rural Cordoba department where peace negotiations have been held. GOC security forces, establishing a presence there for the first time in years, would surround the 200 square kilometer (roughly 11 miles by 7 miles) zone with multiple rings of security. The GOC would not arrest paramilitary leaders in this concentration zone.

[1](#)4. (C) Ambassador suggested that even after paramilitary leaders concentrate in the designated zone, thus submitting themselves to significant GOC control, they must still be held accountable for the actions of their troops and compliance with their cease-fire obligations. It was crucial that the paramilitary leaders not be able to insulate themselves from responsibility for the actions of their troops. For this to be possible, the GOC would have to accept the (unavoidable anyway) continuation of communication between the leaders and their troops. Restrepo agreed and proposed that commanders, on a pre-approved, monitored, and case-by-case basis, be allowed to temporarily leave the concentration zone in order to ensure compliance by their troops. The Ambassador agreed.

Extradition and Legal Benefits not Negotiable

[1](#)5. (C) Restrepo emphasized that he will not negotiate

extradition or any other legal benefits with the paramilitaries, despite their constant pressure. President Uribe has instructed him to insist that the paramilitaries obey the cease-fire, concentrate their troops, submit to verification of the process, and peacefully reinsert themselves into civilian society. Only after they have fulfilled these conditions can their legal situation be reconsidered under any "Alternative Sentencing" legislation that might be approved in the future. Ambassador underscored that the U.S. could not support a peace process that undermines extradition. Restrepo said President Uribe is in complete agreement and had rebuffed pleas from several influential senators that the GOC negotiate the terms of the "Alternative Sentencing" law directly with paramilitary leaders. According to Restrepo, paramilitary commanders have strongly criticized the draft law, accusing him personally of wanting to see them imprisoned and penniless.

Pressuring the Paras

16. (C) Asked if he believes paramilitary commanders are willing to concentrate their troops and negotiate in good faith, Restrepo admitted that some commanders, most notably notorious drug lord Diego Murillo, alias "Adolfo Paz" or "Don Berna," are trying to use the peace process to shield themselves from the law and expand their illicit activities. At the moment, Don Berna holds much sway because of his proven military capabilities. BCB Chief of Operations Julian Bolivar and AUC regional commander Jorge Quarenta are growing in influence. Ernesto Baez already has taken over for Castano as the chief ideologue of the paras and could replace Salvatore Mancuso as the primus inter pares. Restrepo said that commanders with more political aspirations than military resources, such as Mancuso, appear to recognize they have little choice but to negotiate or live in constant fear of being captured by the authorities. Carlos Castano, long the international face of Colombian paramilitarism, has lost most of his political and military influence, making a successful negotiation his best chance for survival. In the most recent paramilitary communique, Castano is a signatory, but is not listed as either a "comandante" or a negotiator at the "unified table."

17. (C) Restrepo said his objective is to bring all the country's paramilitary groups under increasingly tighter GOC control through continued military pressure. Looking ahead, Restrepo and Ambassador agreed that paramilitary commanders who fail to negotiate in good faith must face a full military response.
WOOD